

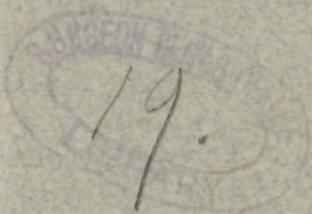
Didama (H.D.)

With the Compliments of

H. D. DIDAMA.

The Model Physician

AND MODEL PATIENT.



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THE

MODEL PHYSICIAN.

A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN

WIETING HALL, SYRACUSE,

February 19th, 1875.

✓ Prescribed
by the Author

BY HENRY D. DIDAMA, M. D.,

*Professor of Principles and Practice of Medicine, in
Syracuse University.*

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1875.

Box 19

THE MODEL PHYSICIAN.

The victors in the Olympic games were crowned with the sacred olive. Thenceforward they were held in high esteem, as public benefactors, by their fellow citizens.

To-night, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Graduating Class*, your persevering zeal in a prolonged struggle—not of muscle but of mind—has been recognized; and you have received your well-won badges of honor.

Your teachers give you a cordial welcome to the medical profession. But the plaudits of the cautious public, and the substantial tokens of their confidence, are still unbestowed. These are to be deserved rather than sought. Then, should they come, they will come to stay.

Your past efforts, however faithful, however commendable, are but an earnest of the labors necessary to attain merited success. They are valuable, chiefly, as gymnastic exercises to strengthen your mental sinews.

The ceremonies this evening are but initiatory rites. Your real life-work still lies before you.

To present to you a high standard of excellence, so that you may not fight uncertainly “as one that beateth the air,” and that you may not prematurely count yourselves already to have attained, I propose to indicate a few characteristics of

THE MODEL PHYSICIAN.

He is a student. He knows that this is an age of search and research; and that an army of vigilant, thinking men, scattered over the entire world, are cultivating diligently the field of science; turning up precious subsoil truths, which must have remained hidden forever from those who merely scratch the surface of the ground; rooting out the stumps of old prejudices; cutting down and clearing away the rank, noxious growth of false facts and barren dogmas; and bringing forward to the harvest time a plenteous crop of golden ideas and healthful knowledge.

He loves books. He reads them to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, but principally that he may be better qualified to benefit his fellows. Human health and life are entrusted to his care, and he feels bound, by common honesty, to give his patients the benefits of all the discoveries and improvements which have been made in the healing art.

In the world of thought there is now great activity. Discovery follows discovery in rapid succession; and he must be industrious who would keep pace with the progress of his art. He must know the past: its theories, its efforts, its failures, its accomplishments. He must know contemporary views. He must know the intimate healthy structure of the human machine, as revealed by the scalpel and the microscope, that he may appreciate the changes wrought by disease. He must know the tactics employed by the thousand enemies that attack the citadel of life. He must be familiar with the multi-form weapons of defence, not only the old and efficient, but the new and still more efficient; hygienic weapons to fortify the citadel; therapeutic weapons to attack the foe; weapons contributed by the various kingdoms of nature; weapons supplied by the four elements of the ancients, fire, air, earth, and the waters under the earth; fire, which stands for sunshine and warmth and electricity; air, which is a symbol for oxygen and the anesthetics; earth, which includes all the treasures of the mineral, animal and vegetable worlds,—

from the iron which brings back to the pale cheek the ruddy glow of health,—from the oil which makes the face of the consumptive man to shine, to the leaves of the trees which are for the healing of the nations; and water, which whether in thermal or medicinal springs, or at sea-side resorts, whether as a beverage or a bath, is a bounteous blessing.

Books are the garner in which these results are stored; and here the model physician feasts his intellect and fattens his memory; while the mind of him, who, from want of appetite or industry, keeps away from the library, shrivels into leanness and starvation.

But the model physician is not a mere bookworm. He studies, at the bed-side, the phenomena of disease, the peculiarities of patients, and the action of remedies. Tact, experience, skill, are thus acquired.

The model physician is a teacher, ready and willing to impart knowledge.

He is not the noisy echo, which adopts, with easy credulity, and hastens to repeat, without consideration, the latest novelty which is uttered. He is not the sponge, which absorbs, without preference, the good and bad alike, and, without improvement, disgorges them on pressure. He is not even the industrious bee, which, while it gathers honey all the day from every opening flower—from noxious nightshade as well as from fragrant apple-blossom—gathers it for its own use. But he is the well supplied and well trimmed lamp, which, from crudest oil, liberates and diffuses the imprisoned sunshine.

He attends the various associations of his medical brethren, whose object is mutual improvement in the glorious art of healing; and he is just as willing to impart as to receive information.

The model physician is honorable.

He engages to observe the rules of the society to which he belongs, and he adheres to his engagements. If he were to swear to his hurt, even, he would perform the vow.

But the Code of Ethics, to which he subscribes, is not the

code of Draco. It is not a collection of illiberal and senseless statutes, like the fabulous Blue Laws of Connecticut—which many people still believe to have been real enactments. It does not impose grievous burdens ; it does not restrain any liberty of action which is unselfish and beneficent.

It is not an effete collection of arbitrary rules ; for, after full discussion, it was unanimously re-endorsed, without amendment, at the last meeting of the American Medical Association, the highest medical authority in the land. It is a wise guide and faithful monitor to him who would guard the honor, uphold the dignity, and so increase the usefulness of the profession. It is broken and contemned, as a galling yoke, only by him who, to promote a narrow selfishness, would trample under his feet all sacred pledges, all moral obligations, all regard for the general welfare. Let us glance at some of its provisions.

In the 1st Article—The duties of Physicians to their Patients—it enjoins attention, steadiness and humanity. It enforces the obligation to observe secrecy and delicacy, not only as regards peculiar diseases, but in relation to the privacies of personal and domestic life, infirmities of disposition and flaws of character. It gives cogent reasons for frequent visits to the sick ; and equally powerful ones for a discontinuance of attention, when it is no longer required. It denounces the inhuman practice of abandoning a patient or sending him off to die in a distant clime, because the case is deemed incurable. It recommends consultations in difficult cases. It advises physicians never to neglect the frequent opportunities, which they have, of warning patients against vicious courses, and of strengthening good resolutions.

Certainly these monitions imply no degrading servitude. Like the analagous moral precepts : “Corruption wins not more than honesty ;” “Be virtuous and you will be happy ;” “Do good as you have opportunity,” they merit, as they receive, universal approbation.

Their observance is commendable, but their neglect or evasion calls for no discipline.

There are, however, three sections of the code which have

evoked much criticism, principally from those who find profit in their violation. This is one :—

“ § 3. It is derogatory to the dignity of the profession to resort to public advertisements, or private cards, or hand-bills, inviting the attention of individuals affected with particular diseases—publicly offering advice and medicine to the poor gratis—or promising radical cures ; or to publish cases and operations in the public prints, or suffer such publications to be made ; to invite laymen to be present at operations, to boast of cures and remedies, to adduce certificates of skill and success, or to perform any other similar acts. These are the ordinary practices of empirics, and are highly reprehensible in a regular physician.”

The diploma of the physician is a notice to the public that he has completed a prescribed course of study, and passed a satisfactory examination. Presumably he is qualified to practice every branch of his profession. If he has a taste or special fitness for certain departments of practice, the public will soon enough find it out. Transcendent abilities will not lack recognition.

It is eminently fit for the vain-glorious mountebank to boast of his skill, and parade his surgical exploits, and advertise the infallible remedies which he has invented, for the cure of cancer, consumption and other obstinate diseases.

But the physician who is jealous for the honor of his profession, who regards it as something more than a mere trade, and who would preserve his self-respect and deserve the respect of his peers, is careful to avoid even the appearance of this advertising evil.

Ours is a learned profession. In usefulness it is not, in dignity it should not be surpassed by any other human calling.

The excellent, in any profession, do not advertise their superiority.

Walt Whitman may brag ; but Bryant and Longfellow modestly wear their unsought laurels.

The better lawyers do not write commendations of their own adroitness and eloquence.

The better clergymen shrink from sensational announcements of theatrical religious services.

Agassiz did not boast.

Newton regarded his vast acquisitions but as a few pebbles cast up by the boundless ocean of truth.

"Equally derogatory," continues the code, "is it for a physician to hold a patent for any surgical instrument or medicine; or to dispense a secret *nostrum*."

Ours is a benevolent profession. The discoveries and inventions of all the wise and worthy are freely contributed to the common stock.

Jenner procured no letters patent for vaccination.

Simpson did not peddle chloroform as a secret nostrum.

Nelaton's probe, Dieulafoy's aspirator, Sims' speculum, the hydrate of chloral, the bromides, and hundreds of minor devices and remedies are unrestricted by concealment or royalty.

The physician, who employs, without cost, the invaluable discoveries of his medical brethren, and then seeks to secure to himself, by a patent, some petty invention or improvement, is not worthy to belong to a generous and self-sacrificing fraternity. He should go out from it, because he is not of it.

He, who is made welcome to the bounteous repasts, furnished by the profession, cannot charge an admission fee to the paltry cold lunch which he may be able to spread.

The propriety of the sections of the Code, which condemn advertising and patents, is acknowledged, not only by the profession, but by the well-informed portion of community.

But the provision relating to consultations has been the theme of not a little acrimonious discussion. This section declares that

"No one can be considered a fit associate in consultation whose practice is based on an exclusive dogma, to the rejection of the accumulated experience of the profession, and of the aids actually furnished by anatomy, physiology, pathology, and organic chemistry."

The irregulars, alluded to in the section, have railed at it; certain newspapers, departing from their usual prudence and cool deliberation, have inveighed against it; and the luckless doctor, who is dismissed for breaking the regulation, and breaking his word at the same time, is paraded in the market-place, profusely decked with a hero's laurels and a martyr's crown.

Let us see whether he deserves either.

The regular profession is both liberal and progressive.

It tolerates diversity of opinion and practice. It invites discussion. It encourages experiment. It examines, patiently, every new theory in pathology and therapeutics, which does not ignore reason, and shock common sense, and contradict wise experience.

It gives a hearty welcome, and subjects to a thousand unprejudiced tests, every newly discovered medicine, and every new application of time-honored remedies.

It eliminates, every day, some old errors of faith and practice. It aims to prove all things, to hold fast that which is good.

The irregular practitioner claims to have better methods and better results.

He rejects the accumulated experience of the past as worthless.

He contemns the established principles of the profession as false, and their practice as injurious.

He swears allegiance to some exclusive dogma, or he nails his faith to some panacea.

Whether he be right or wrong in his assumptions, it is not necessary here to discuss. It is sufficient that, between him and the members of the regular profession, there is an irreconcilable difference. There is no middle ground on which the parties can agree to stand. Compromise is impossible.

A consultation, held under these circumstances, can be of no avail to the patient.

And the physician, who consents to barter his self-respect for a fraudulent consultation fee, is properly declared by the Code, to be unworthy of membership in an honorable profession.

No disrespect is meant to be shown, in these remarks, towards any honest dissenters from the orthodox faith. True, we believe their views to be erroneous, and their practice a fearful trifling with human life. True, we believe that the rigid scrutiny to which every tenet of our faith is being subjected, and that the thorough and extensive experiments which are being made to ascertain the effect of administering, and also the effect of withholding medicines, will ultimately leave, for the exclusive systems, no valid reason for their existence.

But many of these irregular practitioners are intelligent and estimable men. Some of them are our neighbors and our personal friends. Deceived they may be, and illogical, and too credulous ; but they are not necessarily quacks, and we should not stigmatize them as such.

Varying the language of the Venetian Israelite, we say to them :—Gentlemen, we will eat with you, walk with you, trade with you, and so following ; but we will not fraternize with you, nor consult with you.

The model physician stands fast in his integrity.
He detests intensely the so-called tricks of the trade.

He never misnames a disease, nor magnifies its danger, in order to gain plaudits for a skill which he does not possess.

He does not pander to popular prejudice. He does not claim to practice two contradictory systems of medicine. He does not manifest an exaggerated zeal and sympathy that he may win a patient or retain him.

Almost every patient regards his illness as one of extreme severity ; and he has little respect for the judgment of the medical attendant who does not confirm this opinion.

Some physicians, of sensitive temperament, have a sympathy which is almost morbid. They bear the burdens, they suffer

the anguish of all their patients. They are knights of the rueful countenance. They go mourning all their days.

Now, these may not be the best type of physicians ; but they are sure to be popular. Their weakness is so amiable, their tenderness so genuine, that, while we pity, we give them our hearty respect.

But there are doctors who take advantage of the craving for sympathy which all sick people have. They disguise their intense selfishness ; they assume a benevolent look ; they put on gentleness as a cloak ; they “aggravate” their voice ; and, in tremulous accents, talk soft words of kindness and pity. This practice, besides being a fraud, is a downright injury to the patient. It hinders his recovery.

Sick people need encouragement ; and the brightest side of their case should be exhibited.

The physician, who, at the bedside of his patient, thinks of aught except how he, best and soonest, can cure the disease, is not fit to take human life into his mercenary hands. He may take no thought for his own reputation. If he cure his patients speedily, people will find it out and he will have employment ; but if he seek, by plausible trick, to cover up his deficiencies in intellect or education, and gain an undeserved notoriety, although he may have a temporary success, his patrons will come at length to rate him at his real value.

Patients need the bracing stimulus of hope, and not the enervating influence of solemn sympathy.

The model physician irradiates the sick chamber with the light of his cheerful presence. He may not be hilarious—he is not indifferent—but he has an irrepressible good nature, which lifts the patient out of the Slough of Despond, and places his feet on the firm land of health. In desperate cases, even a little harmless levity may be beneficial. Myrrh is good, but sometimes mirth is better. A well-timed jest may break up a congestion. A pun may add pungency to the sharpest stimulant.

His patient may never know the extent of the danger from

which he has been rescued ; he may never half appreciate the skillful services ; *but, he is cured* : and that is all about which the model physician feels any concern.

Had the doctor been gloomy and pathetic ; adroitly exciting fears, and magnifying danger, the invalid and his friends would have been lavish of praise ; but the depressing influence of the sombre sympathy would have endangered the life, or prolonged the disease.

But the model physician preserves his individuality.

He does not tamely copy the manners of any one, however celebrated.

Saul's armor, although admirable for Saul, was promptly rejected by David, as cumbersome and useless.

The ponderous physician may challenge our respect, for his profound candor ; but we smile at his awkward attempts to be sprightly and playful.

The solemn doctor moves us to tears only when he tries to be facetious.

The model physician treats his professional brethren according to the injunction of the Golden Rule.

He does not seek to exalt himself by dragging others down.

He does not publish the mistakes of his neighbor ; for he knows that the broadest mantle of charity is often required to hide his own failings. Detraction, the sole weapon of little minds, has no place in his armor.

He puts on no airs of patronizing condescension towards junior members of the fraternity. He affects no contempt for his competitors ; he never stabs with an innuendo ; he never damns with faint praise. He generously defends, from unjust aspersions, even his most formidable rival, and he always discourages those petty squabbles which so disgrace the profession.

The model physician may not be unduly sensitive ; he is not easily astonished ; but he is filled with wonder that any physician can hesitate to beg admission to the alms-house, rather than intrude or continue his attentions when he knows they are not welcome or required.

You will expect me to say, and so I do, that the model physician belongs to the regular school ; yet candor compels me to add that I know some excellent men and women who are not of our faith ; and I am not quite certain that all regulars are model physicians.

Four hundred and fifty years ago, Guy de Chauliac, tracing the character of a physician, recommended "that he be learned, expert, ingenious ; that he be bold where he is sure, and timid when in doubt ; that he avoid bad cures and practices ; be gracious to the sick, generous to his companions ; wise in predictions ; chaste, sober, pitiful and merciful ; not covetous, nor extortionate, but receive a moderate fee, according to his labor, the abilities of his patient, the character of the issue or event, and his own dignity."

Little need be added,—*Ladies and Gentlemen*—to this description by the French physician.

Your habits of study, your zeal, your respectful attention, your correct deportment, have furnished the Faculty of this College good ground for the belief that you will all strive to become model physicians.

Obstacles may block up your path ; surmount them.

Temptations will assail you,—temptations to indolence, to falsehood, to vice, to envy, to meanness, to impurity ; resist them.

Slander may becloud your reputation ; wait ; be concerned only to have your character invulnerable.

Business may be dull ; you will have more time for study.

Your cash receipts may be small ; the gratitude and love of your patients may be more precious than gold.

To St. Luke, the practice may not have been lucrative ; but, for eighteen hundred years, he has been the "Beloved Physician."

We charge you to be true to principle and loyal to your profession. We invite you to reciprocate the love of your *Alma Mater*, and to labor for her welfare ; we counsel you to be sincere followers of the Great Physician, who ever went about doing good.

THE MODEL PATIENT.

Extract from an Address to the Alumni Association of Albany Medical College, Dec. 22, 1874, by H. D. Didama, President.

In a limited sense, the model patient is one who trusts his physician implicitly, and takes, without murmur or grimace, the medicines set before him. He does not, as the manner of some is, ask prying questions concerning the name and nature of each ingredient in the potion; and he never has the temerity to proscribe any remedy or appliance, however heroic, which the medical attendant prescribes.

But in a wider sense the model patient is more than this. He exercises great care in choosing his family physician; he bestows confidence without measure, and he stands firm and unwavering in his allegiance. He knows that human health and life are too valuable to be entrusted to the ignorant or rash or careless practitioner; that the relations subsisting between the family and the medical attendant are too intimate and sacred to be established with one who is immoral or vicious or indiscreet; and so the model patient selects as his physician a man of brain and conscience and heart; one who, by assiduous study, becomes possessed of the best thoughts

of his eminent brothers in the profession ; one who is able and willing to make a practical and faithful application of his knowledge to the case demanding his care.

The model patient makes no experiments with quacks or quack medicines. Even the harmless herbs, which the good old nurse so kindly volunteers, and so highly recommends, are respectfully declined with thanks. He seeks not gratuitous aid from "the retired clergyman, whose sands of life" are still mercifully permitted to drizzle, although they had "nearly run out" years and years ago. The siren songs of the sarsaparilla men have no seductions for him. He never consults the peripatetic mountebanks who periodically infest our cities and villages, no matter how loudly they may blow their clamorous trumpets. He has learned, as a rule which has no exception, that every boastful, advertising doctor is a quack, and that every quack is a swindler.

The model patient treats his physician with consideration. If the illness be serious, or involved in obscurity, he may ask for a consultation ; but he allows his medical adviser a large liberty in the selection of counsel. He does not demand that a practitioner shall be called to whom there may be strong objections, personal or professional. If, after proper deliberation, the model patient, feeling a loss of confidence, decides to dismiss his physician, he communicates his decision with gentleness but entire frankness. He never first invites another doctor to make a clandestine visit, and then sends a sneaking dismissal to the regular attendant. And he is very careful not to indulge in the bad taste and unkindness of parading before you, the new attendant, the faults and shortcomings of your predecessor.

The model patient cherishes a deep feeling of gratitude for the faithful services of his family physician. Of course, as an honest man he pays the doctor's bills, and he pays them promptly, and he manifests unfeigned surprise at what he calls their moderate amount. But this cheerful and ready discharge of the pecuniary obligation leaves unimpaired the grateful appre-

ciation which is felt for the doctor's skillful and friendly offices. And instead of locking up this feeling in his own breast, the model patient seeks occasion to communicate it to his medical friend, and so brings refreshment to the care-worn spirit, and new strength to bear the sometimes weary load of professional life.

The model patient stands fast in his loyalty to the physician of his choice. Envy may detract, and gossip may cackle, and slander may hiss, but the intelligent and well-matured faith remains unshaken. The counsel of Polonius has been heard and heeded :

“The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel.”

Gentlemen, I trust that you all have and all deserve many model patients. I trust that, when your birthdays come, you have, and will continue to have, many and many a *souvenir* of the warm friendship which your devoted skill has enkindled. And I trust that your pleasant dreams on the near at hand Christmas eve, of slippers and dressing-gowns, of neckties and warm, ribbed woolen stockings, of seal skin caps and gloves, and flowers, and pictures, and precious books, all from the dear ones at home, and from appreciative model patients, will be most abundantly realized.

